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ABSTRACT

Social Studies textbooks from grades 1-4 published by Macmillan (1985), Scott Foresman (1986), and Silver Burdett & Ginn (1988) were selected for review to assess the position given by these books to geographic place vocabulary. Each was evaluated on the basis of frequency and continuity of places named, the attention to stressing place name importance, directing the use of drill, and evidence of suggesting mnemonic devices to teach place vocabulary. Silver Burdett appears to have done the best job of presenting place names in a manner that would facilitate easy recall by students using those books. Four problems are seen with students successfully developing place vocabularies: (1) place vocabulary development is not a stated goal, skill, or objective in any of the series examined; (2) teachers are not encouraged to have students memorize a place vocabulary; (3) drill and mnemonic devices are not activities suggested for teaching a place vocabulary; and (4) there is a lack of focus on a manageable number of places as consistent points of reference. The establishment of a place name vocabulary must become a priority for teaching students to be competent citizens. Teachers should identify the map/globe locations of places at every opportunity. They should select a manageable number of places as a fundamental place vocabulary and employ drill and mnemonic devices to help students memorize these place names. Three tables and a 10-item bibliography are included. (JB)

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Do Elementary Social Studies Textbooks Teach Place Vocabulary? How to Supplement Weak Texts

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Header: TEXTBOOKS

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The Problem

The intent of this paper is to assess the position of geographic place vocabulary in first, second, third, and fourth grade textbooks; and to suggest ways of supplementing place vocabulary instruction where it appeares appropriate. Place vocabulary is the geographic places which a person can name and locate on a map or globe. We selected three of the most popular elementary social studies series of textbooks to use in our evaluation.

Procedure

First, second, third, and fourth grades textbooks of Macmillan (1985), Scott Foresman (1986), and Silver Burdett & Ginn (1988) elementary social studies series were selected for review. Each was evaluated on the basis of frequency and continuity of places named, the attention to stressing place name importance, directing the use of drill, and evidence of suggesting mnemonic devices to teach a place vocabulary. Recommendations are then made concerning supplementary efforts aimed at teaching a place vocabulary. The major purpose of this examination was not to assess the overall quality of these series, it was to assess their attention to place vocabulary development.

The procedure included the examination of tables of contents, atlases, maps, indexes, supplementary materials, and teaching instructions. The publishers attention to place vocabulary development was assessed for grades one through four and from publisher to publisher. Place names include names of nations, states, cities, oceans, seas, lakes, rivers, forests, mountains, and regions. Tables of contents were read to detect references to maps and possible place

vocabulary experiences. The number of maps which referred to specific places was recorded. The presence of atlases was noted. Indexes and the text within the textbooks were checked for the numbers of place names which were used in each grade. While examining texts, attention was paid to frequency and continuity of place names from grade to grade. Teachers editions of each series were scrutenized for their emphasis on the importance of place vocabulary, practicing place name/location recall, their encouragement to memorize place names and locations, their direction to employ mnemonic devices, and encouragement to "bound" places.

Findings

Macmillan's 1985 elementary social studies textbook series contains a student textbook, a workbook, a teacher's edition for both, and a Teacher's Resource Book at each grade level. All of the Macmillan 1-4 social studies textbooks seemed to put geography in a prominant position throughout their materials. Numerous maps of various types are incorporated into the textbooks. The intention to teach place vocabulary appears to be there, however, there is no straightforward direction for teachers to systematically work toward the development of a specific place vocabulary. (see Table 1).

Table 1

Place Name Analysis of Grades 1-4 Textbooks

Publisher	Date	Grade	Atlas	Maps	Names
Macmillan	1985	One	Yes	7	8
Macmillan	1985	Two	Yes	19	15
Macmillan	1985	Three	Yes	51	85
Macmillan	1985	Four	Yes	52	175
Scott, Foresman	1986	One	Yes	4	14
Scott, Foresman	1986	Two	Yes	5	14
Scott, Foresman	1986	Three	Yes	37	93
Scott, Foresman	1986	Four	Yes	69	234
Silver Burdett & Ginn	1988	One	Yes	4	15
Silver Burdett & Ginn	1988	Two	Yes	15	40
Silver Burdett & Ginn	1988	Three	Yes	41	82
Silver Burdett & Ginn	1988	Four	Yes	52	337

Note.

Date = Date of publication

Grade = Grade level of textbook

Atlas = Presence or absense of atlas

Maps = Number of maps containing actual place names

Names = Number of place names in the textbook

All grade 1-4 student textbooks contained three parts which directly referred to geography. "Learning about Maps and Globes" was a separate section in each grade level's textbook. The contents for each grade level made reference to an atlas and there was a list of maps. There was fair place name continuity from grade to grade. (see Table 2)

Teaching objectives for grades 1-4 which concerned place vocabulary, asserted that students should locate, name, or border places which were named. The third grade teachers edition offered the nearest thing to encouraging memorization, "Study the map and learn what countries are near ours" p.26. Neither drill, memorizing, nor mnemonic device instruction were detected in any of the grade 1-4 teachers editions.

Scott Foresman, 1986 elementary social studies for kindergarten through the fourth grade contain student textbooks, teacher's editions of the textbooks, and teacher resource centers. The series generally addresses the development of a geographic place vocabulary.

Some activities in this and other series do not help students learn the relative location of places presented in isolation. Representative of that is page 32 in the fourth-grade textbook. Here we examine the town of Danube, Minnesota. No mention is made to relative location other than it is in southwest Minnesota, southwest of the twin cities (Minneapolis and St. Paul), and in an area of wheat and livestock farms. The teacher is to, "Emphasize that Lester lives in the northern part of the United States, where it is cold and snowy in winter" p.33. That may not be enough information for students to identify Minnesota's location.

The teachers editions of grades 1-4 instructed students to locate, labele the boundaries, and identify places by name. We found no directions for students to memorize. There were no instructions to drill or use mnemonic devices to teach a place vocabulary. Place vocabulary was not identified as important.

Silver Burdett & Ginn's 1988 edition of their elementary social studies series was found to be packaged in a somewhat different manner from the other two series evaluated. There is the traditional textbook and teachers edition plus a file type basket containing files labled: 1) Practice Masters "Lesson.Vocabulary.Place Geography", 2) Test Masters, 3) Outline Map Masters, 4) Weekly Planning Guide, 5) Wall Maps, 6) Workbook Teacher Edition, and 7) file folders for each chapter.

Each of the first through fourth-grade student textbooks contained a "Place Geography Dictionary" or a "Gazetteer". Teachers editions (TE) provided objectives and activities which may lead students to develop a place vocabulary. Grade one directs the teacher to "Name the states that border the students' state" p.63. The second grade TE continues bounding and place related objectives, "Identify the seven continents and four oceans on a map" p.44. Identification and naming objectives and activities continued on through the third and fourth grades. We were unable to find any affirmation of the importance of a place vocabulary or instructions to have any place names memorized. Nor are there instructions to use or develop mnemonic devices or to imploy drill in teaching a place vocabulary.

Table 2

Place Name Continuity from Grade to Grade

Publisher	Date	1 & 2	2 & 3	3 & 4	1 thru 4
Macmillan	1985	2	5	31	2
Scott, Foresman	1986	2	4	30	0
Silver, Burdett	1988	11	27	61	8

Note.

Place names reoccurring in each year's textbooks throughout grades one, two, three, and four:

Macmillan 1985 - United States, Washington, D.C.

Scott, Foresman 1986 - None

Silver, Burdett 1988 - Alaska, California, Canada, Hawaii, Mexico, New York, United States, and Washington, D.C.

Conclusions and Recommendations

The elementary social studies textbook series we examined do address the teaching and learning of place vocabulary but not in a straightforward manner. Of the three series discussed in this paper Silver Burdett appears to have done the most adequate job of presenting place names in such a manner as to facilitate easy recall by students who used those books. Repetition and continuity of some place names from grade to grade was more evident in this series than in the other series examined. It must be noted, however, that the Silver Burdett (1988) is the most recent publication date and should be more in tune with the most current social studies curriculum pressures.

We see four problems with students successfully developing place vocabularies. First, place vocabulary development is not a stated goal, skill, or objective in any of the series examined. Second, teachers are not encouraged to have students memorize a place vocabulary. Third, drill and mnemonic devices are not activities suggested for teaching a place vocabulary. Finally, there is the lack of focus upon a manageable number of places as consistent points of reference. As the grades progress, more and more place names are alluded to, but it is sometimes done in a disconnected manner.

Educators have studied and encouraged the use of several strategies for teaching place vocabulary. At least one asserts that teachers should often repeat the names and locations of places to be learned. Smith, (1986) found that systematic drill is an effective way to teach place vocabulary.

Kindergarten and first-grade teachers may help children develop an understanding of place, as a concept, by having them map their hand and desk (Hawkins & Larkins, 1983). Encourage children to identify by name the different parts of their hand and the items on their desks.

Larkins (1984) wrote that, "the foundation for appropriate decision making by citizens in a democracy is laid in the elementary school. Part of that foundation is the acquisition by young children of a political-geographic place vocabulary" p.8. He went on to encourage teachers to insist upon the memorization of some important places: States and major cities in the U.S.A., the location of countries north and south of the U.S.A., and recognition by name of the continents and oceans of the world.

Larkins suggested teaching the place names and locations of the far western states. His lesson used six steps: 1) Motivate with colored slides of interesting activities such as cattle ranching in such western places as Wyoming. 2) Demonstrate that it is possible to know the names of the western places by turning your back to a map in front of the room and naming the western states in a systematic manner. 3) Illustrate how mnemonic devices can be used to recall place names with COW to help recall California, Oregon, and Washington. 4) Practice recalling the place names of western states through questions like, "Which of the three is in the middle of the other two?," and "What do the letters COW stand for?" p.9.

Hawkins (1985) encouraged the use of music to teach the names of places. The popular tune "The Heart of Rock and Roll" by Huey Lewis was used to illustrate how a tune can be used by having students first

identify the names of places in the tune, match the places with their states, then use textbooks to locate the places on outline maps of the United States. Finally a crossword puzzle based upon the places named was used to follow-up and reenforce place name recall. Because of its appeal to children, a similar approach using other tunes, either old or new, could be contrived.

Saveland (1961) provided a list of instructions for developing geography-readiness. Kindergarten students come to school and return home. Their first geography lesson. In grade one students read about the family, church, school and the community which may become place referents. Grade two is the time to have students create a map of their neighborhood and to begin identifying on a globe some of the place names which children hear. By grade three students are producing maps of their community, their own state and others on a United States map, and students are to identify the cardinal directions. Fourth-graders should reinforce their knowledge of places with size, distance, and time activities.

Table 3

Fifty World Places

Algeria	Ethiopia	Peru
Arctic Ocean	France	Philippines
Argentina	India	Poland
Atlantic Ocean	Indian Ocean	Rio de Janeiro
Australia	Indonesia	Saudi Arabia
Beijing (Peking)	Iran	South Africa
Brazil	Italy	Spain
Buenos Aires	Japan	Sweden
Cairo	Johannesburg	Sydney
Calcutta	London	Tokyo
Canada	Mediterranean Sea	Turkey
Caribbean Sea	Mexico	United Kingdom
Chile	Mexico City	United States
China	Moscow	USSR (Soviet Union)
Colombia	New York City	Yugoslavia
Cuba	Nigeria	Zaire (Belgian Congo)
Egypt	Paris	

Saveland (1980)

The establishment of a place name vocabulary as a reliable reference in the cognitive repertoire of students must become a priority if educators are committed to teaching students to be competent citizens. The accomplishment of that goal is possible if teachers will commit themselves: 1) Resolve that a place vocabulary is important and basic to the social studies; 2) Identify the map/globe locations of places at every opportunity (i.e., text references, literature, music, student/teacher travel, news events, etc.); 3) Select a manageable number of places as a fundamental place vocabulary such as students' hometown, home-state, home-country; 50 United States place names; 50 world place names; 4) Employ drill and mnemonic devices to help students memorize a place vocabulary.

Place names are key to making connections between places, time, and events. Place is fundamental to the recognition of patterns which occur in the social studies. Place is basic to the meaning of current and past events. Place is basic to competent citizenship.

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